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The S.P.S.S.I. and Racial Differences

by

Henry E. Garrett

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I.A.A.E.E.



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Dr. Henry E. Garrett, whose career in the field of psychology as teacher, author, lecturer and government consultant spans more than forty years, is Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Columbia University

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Born in Virginia in 1894, he graduated from the University of Richmond in 1915 with a B.A. degree. All of Dr. Garrett's post-graduate work was done at Columbia University (M.A., 1921 and Ph.D., 1923). In 1923, he was named Psychology Instructor at Columbia. For the next thirty years he served as a member of the Columbia faculty. During his long tenure, Dr. Garrett was Executive Head of the Department of Psychology for fifteen years. He served as Assistant Professor from 1926 to 1935, when he became Associate Professor. In 1942 he was appointed Professor and Chairman of Columbia's Psychology Department. In 1956 he retired as Professor Emeritus and became Visiting Professor at the University of Virginia.

Throughout his long career, Dr. Garrett has been active in professional groups and as an author of books and articles dealing with methods, experiments and problems in the field of psychology and psychometrics. His first book, *Statistics in Psychology and Education* (1926), is now in its fifth edition and still used as a college textbook. Another book that has brought Dr. Garrett widespread recognition is his *Great Experiments in Psychology*, a historical survey of differential and experimental psychology. In addition to seven books, he has written more than fifty articles and monographs. He is also General Editor of the *American Psychological Series* and a member of the Editorial Board of *Psychometrika*.

From 1937 to 1943 he was a member of the Division of Psychology and Anthropology of the National Research Council and, in 1940, vice chairman. He also served as Consultant to the Secretary of War from 1940 to 1944. Dr. Garrett's reputation as one of the country's leading authorities in the field of psychology and psychometrics made him the choice of the American Psychological Association for its President during 1946. In 1944 he served as President of the Eastern Psychological Association and in 1943 he was President of the Psychometric Society. For his work in systematizing intelligence testing, Dr. Garrett was awarded a D.Sc. by the University of Richmond in 1954. His books include:

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The SPSSI and Racial Differences

At the September 1961 meeting of the APA, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues adopted a brief resolution in which they took exception to a paper of mine published in the summer of 1961 (Garrett, 1961). In my paper, I listed five sources which I believe have contributed to the equalitarian view of race differences and showed (I thought convincingly) that Negro-white differences in mental tests are so regular and persistent as strongly to suggest a genetic basis. SPSSI questions this conclusion. On the contrary, they say:

The evidence of a quarter of a century of research on this problem can readily be summarized. There are differences in intelligence when one compares a random sample of whites and Negroes. What is equally clear is that no evidence exists that leads to the conclusion that such differences are innate. Quite to the contrary, the evidence points *overwhelmingly* (italics mine) to the fact that when one compares Negroes and whites of comparable cultural and educational background, differences in intelligence diminish markedly. The more comparable the background of white and Negro groups, the less the difference in intelligence. There is no *direct* (italics mine) evidence that supports the view that there is an innate difference between members of different racial groups.

Just what sort of evidence is to be considered "direct" I am not at all certain. It is often forgotten that the *fact* of racial differences is so immediate and compelling to most people that the burden of proof is on those who claim equality—not the reverse. Contrary to the

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SPSSI statement, the evidence for Negro-white equality in intelligence under comparable conditions—far from being overwhelming—is not even moderately convincing. Let us look at the record.

STUDIES OF SCHOOL CHILDREN AND ADULTS ¹

The SPSSI statement would lead one to expect Negro overlap of white norms to be significantly greater when environmental factors have been equated than is the case in random samples. In fact, this resolution states the evidence for diminished mean differences under comparable conditions to be "overwhelming." Comparative studies can be cited which bear on this point. Tanser (1959) tested Negro and white pupils in seven schools (grades 1 to 8) in Kent County, Ontario, Canada. Standard verbal and performance tests were administered. Practically all of the Negro children were reported to be descendants of Negro slaves who had fled to Canada from the United States prior to the Civil War. The social and economic conditions of the whites and Negroes were substantially the same. Tanser writes: "Here the Negro in 1939 as in 1852, with few exceptions, is not only free but he is on a level in regard to every political and social advantage with the white man. . . ." On all of the tests, lan-

guage and nonlanguage, there were mean differences between comparable white and Negro groups varying from 15 to 19 IQ points. Negro overlap of white norms varied from 13% to 20% for the different psychological tests. Based upon a summary of studies in this field, Shuey (1958) reports the average Negro overlap for school children in random groups to be between 10% and 20%. Apparently the social and economic equality enjoyed by the Negro children in Canada did *not* increase the *relative* performance of these children as compared with white. Even psychologists oriented toward the equalitarian view have had difficulty in explaining away these results (Krech & Crutchfield, 1959).

In the second study of school children, Bruce (1940) administered three standard tests to large numbers of Negro and white school children in an economically poor rural community in southern Virginia. The mean Stanford-Binet IQs proved to be 90 for the whites and 76 for the Negroes. Two groups of Negroes and whites were subsequently paired off for equal socioeconomic status in terms of the Sims Score Card. The economic level of both groups was so low that the matching was even closer than it appeared to be. Stanford-Binet IQs of these matched groups were 86 for the whites and 77 for the Negroes. Thus the mean difference in IQ was reduced by 5 points. But the Negro overlap in Stanford-Binet, as in the other mental tests, never exceeded 20%, and fell as low as 15%. Again, it appears that these matched groups were no more alike than are random samples of white and Negro

¹ Preschool and younger children have not been considered since tests in the early years do not correlate with later, more scholastic tests of intelligence.

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school children for whom the Negro overlap is 10% to 20%.

In a study of matched groups of Negro and white freshmen in a New York City college, Shuey (1942) found that on the ACE psychological examination the Negroes overlapped the white norm by 18%. Forty-three white and 43 Negro students were paired for such factors as age, sex, occupation of father, academic standing, and place of birth of parents. It seems highly probable that the Negro students were more highly selected than the white, as the United States census for 1940 reports that only 2.2% of Negroes completed four years of high school in that year. It is quite likely, too, that the Negroes were of considerably higher social status in their own group than were the whites. The Negro overlap in these groups of 18% is much higher than the 5% reported by Canady (1936) for the ACE test. But the Negro overlap in random samples on the Otis S-A (Price, 1929) in seven accredited Negro colleges was 20%, almost exactly that found by Shuey in her comparable (and highly selected) groups.

Out of a total of nearly 3,000 high school seniors in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, McGurk (1951) selected 213 Negroes and 213 whites who could be matched for age, sex, courses of study, and for 11 socioeconomic factors. Each child was given a test of 74 items, 37 being identified as *cultural* and 37 as *non-cultural*. The division into cultural and noncultural questions was based on the opinions of 78 judges (including psychologists and graduate students) who sorted the more than 200 items into those considered

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least cultural, most cultural and neutral. McGurk's test represents a serious and on the whole successful attempt to get two widely different kinds of items with respect to their demands on socioeconomic background. Some of the choices have been criticized rather superficially (Anastasi, 1960). But it is significant that no one has repeated McGurk's study or improved on it. On the whole test of 74 items (cultural + noncultural), the Negroes overlapped the white mean by 29%. This is higher than the overlap usually found in random groups, in part, perhaps, because of the nature of the test. However, it does not exceed the 28% by which unselected groups of Negro soldiers in World War I overlapped the Alpha means of white soldiers from the same state (Garrett, 1945). When the upper 25% of each group was studied (53 Negroes and 53 whites), the Negro overlap was 18%. This shows that the Negro high school children with the best cultural scores fell further behind comparable whites than did the group as a whole. According to SPSSI's hypothesis, the overlap should have been higher in the highly cultural group; instead, it was 18% against 29%.

OTHER STUDIES BEARING ON NEGRO-WHITE DIFFERENCES WHEN ENVIRONMENT IS CONTROLLED

Several studies have purported to show that when southern Negro children enter northern schools (where educational opportunities are allegedly better), their mental test scores improve markedly. The evidence

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is dubious at best. Klineberg (1935) has compared the scores on several mental tests earned by groups of Negro children (12-year-olds) whose parents had lived in New York from 1 to 12 years. Most of the migrant children came from the South. The two major findings were (a) that the mean test score on the National Intelligence Test (a highly verbal examination) made by the various groups improved steadily with residence in New York; and (b) that the Negro children who had lived in New York all of their lives were from six months to one and one quarter years in "mental age" behind the white norms. The first finding means that environment (presumably better schooling) did indeed raise the mean scores of the migrating Negroes, but did not succeed in bringing them up to the white norms. It may be noted that the correlation of the NIT with school grade is from .40 to .60, so that school achievement was confounded with mental test scores. The Klineberg study, though often quoted as authoritative, is in fact far from conclusive. Sampling was uncontrolled and selection unknown; differences between New York schools were often as large as differences between length-of-residence groups; measures of variability were often unreported, so that only trends can be observed. Furthermore, this study could not possibly demonstrate that life in New York *caused* the improvement in score, as the various residence groups were made up of different samples of children whose initial status, of course, was unknown.

A later study by Lee (1951) showed that on a verbal group test of intelligence, southern Negro children migrating to Philadelphia improved their scores with resi-

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dence in the city. The change with time-in-school was small (the maximum being six IQ points) and most changes were well within the *SE* of the test score. Moreover, the observed improvement can hardly be a result of better *schooling* alone, as the resident children gained only 1.6 points from the first to the ninth grade, whereas the migrants gained from two to six points. The residents were superior to the migrants from the start. Neither of these studies shows that improved educational opportunities bring the Negro child *significantly* closer to the white norm.

Some of the results from the AGCT, widely given in World War II, bear directly upon the question of the improvement of the Negro under better educational conditions. Davenport (1946) has tabulated the percentages of Negro and white soldiers in a total of 549,608 men who scored in each category of the AGCT when educational level was the same for both groups. Of those men who completed grade school, 24% of the white and 4% of the Negroes scored in the two *highest* categories (I and II), whereas 33% of the white soldiers and 76% of the Negroes fell in the two *lowest* categories (IV and V). It is significant that of those white soldiers who had *completed* high school 66% scored in the two highest categories, whereas only 41% of the Negroes who had *completed* college fell in these two categories. Even discounting the differences among schools of the same level, there is still a wide gap in performance left to be explained. The inference that there were native differences appears to be reasonable.

SUMMARY

Negro overlap of white norms when groups are matched for various educational and socioeconomic factors does not increase markedly as compared with overlap in random samples. This is true for elementary, high school, and college groups. Instead of the evidence for diminished differences between Negroes and whites of comparable status being "overwhelming" as the SPSSI statement asserts, it is, in fact, non-existent.



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